

ORAL QUESTION WITH DEBATE O-0029/08/rev.1

pursuant to Rule 108 of the Rules of Procedure

by Elly de Groen-Kouwenhoven, Angelika Beer and Caroline Lucas, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group, Luisa Morgantini, on behalf of the GUE/NGL Group, Annemie Neyts-Uyttebroeck, on behalf of the ALDE Group, Ana Maria Gomes, on behalf of the PSE Group, Ģirts Valdis Kristovskis, on behalf of the UEN Group, Karl von Wogau and Stefano Zappalà, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group to the Council

Subject: Global treaty to ban uranium weapons

The use of Depleted Uranium in warfare runs counter to the basic rules and principles enshrined in written and customary International Humanitarian and Environmental Law. Therefore, in November 2006, the European Parliament strengthened its previous calls for a moratorium on uranium weapons by adopting its resolution on 'biological weapons and inhumane conventional weapons'. There is increasing support worldwide. In March 2007 Belgium adopted its national law to forbid the manufacture, use, storage, sale, acquisition, supply and transit of uranium weapons. In May 2007 the European Parliament exhibited the pictures and testimonies of victims of uranium weapons in Iraq (70% of Iraq is covered with DU dust). In October 2007 the Italian Defence Minister disclosed that between 1996 and 2006, 37 Italian soldiers most probably died because of exposure to uranium weapons on their missions to Iraq and the Balkans. In several other countries similar cases occurred, affecting hundreds of veterans. In the UK and the United States increasing concern over DU's health effects has led to the implementation of testing regimes for returning soldiers. In December 2007 the UN General Assembly passed, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution highlighting concerns over the military use of uranium. The resolution, entitled 'Effects of the use of armaments and ammunitions containing depleted uranium', urges UN member states to re-examine the health hazards posed by the use of uranium weapons. Growing evidence of uranium's chemical toxicity and potentially carcinogenic nature dictates the application of the Precautionary Principle in line with EU law.

1. What steps is the Council taking or planning to take to follow up this European Parliament resolution?
2. How will the Council integrate the issue of uranium weapons into the European Security Strategy and Strategy on Weapons of Mass Destruction it has adopted?
3. What guarantees can the Council provide – in line with the precautionary principle and in the form of DU assessment in the context of each mission – that the use of uranium weapons will be avoided in ESDP missions, both on behalf, or under the auspices, of the EU and in cooperation with NATO and the US?
4. What measures can the Council take to ensure that ESDP personnel do not make contact with DU-contaminated objects or enter DU-contaminated quarters or areas?
5. What dialogue has the Council secretariat established on this issue with its US counterparts, Euromil, soldiers and civilians, for example in connection with operations in the Balkans and Iraq?

Tabled: 01.04.2008

Forwarded: 02.04.2008

Deadline for reply: 23.04.2008